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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
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RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2896
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5152
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2761
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3396
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3519
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000562

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: EFFECTIVE MEDIA COVERAGE OF DAS KROL AT
INTERNATIONAL ENERGY CONFERENCE

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11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (U) SUMMARY: Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, George Krol, visited Turkmenistan April 22-24, 2009, holding meetings with government officials and heading the U.S. delegation at the "Reliable and Secure Transit of Energy and Its Role in Maintaining Sustainable Economic Development and International Cooperation" Conference. The visit received generally accurate and wide media coverage. Krol's April 24 press gaggle with foreign media stringers and exclusive interviews to "Reuters" and "RFE/RL" Turkmen language broadcast received accurate and positive coverage. Yet, some media misinterpreted Krol's remarks regarding policy toward Iran. Most media coverage focused on Krol's remarks regarding energy diversification and regional cooperation. Some media accurately carried Post's press release on the visit. END SUMMARY.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT KROL VISIT TO TURKMENISTAN

13. (U) On April 22, the "Watan" evening TV news program (Turkmen) highlighted Krol's meeting with government officials. The story noted that Krol was heading the U.S. delegation at the international conference. The following day, "Turkmenistan" TV Channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabian, Persian, French) also highlighted Krol's official meetings in its short news program and carried other broader coverage throughout the day. Both "Watan" and "Turkmenistan" stories carried Krol's accurate interview remarks. "Turkmenistan" TV channel's April 25 story highlighted Krol's comments in an interview at the opening of the conference.

14. (U) On April 23, "Times of Central Asia" (English) accurately reprinted the Embassy press release on the visit.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT KROL'S SPEECH FROM THE CONFERENCE ON U.S. POLICY FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

15. (U) April 24 stories from "Agence France Presse" (English), Russian "RIA Novosti" (Russian), German "Deutsche Welle" (Russian), Azeri "Day.Az" (English, Russian), gave accurate quotations and coverage on Krol's speech at the conference. International media

highlighted Krol's remarks on the importance of partnership throughout Eurasia, respect for sovereignty of states in the region and regional cooperation on energy supply. The Azeri and Russian media made emphasis on Krol's remarks encouraging dialog with Azerbaijan in developing energy export ties.

¶6. (U) "Agence France Presse", German "Deutsche Welle" highlighted Krol's remarks that the Obama administration is placing greater emphasis on cooperation with the countries of Central Asia. State daily "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 47,091) printed an excerpt of Krol's speech regarding regional cooperation on energy exports and diversification. (NOTE: Krol was the only featured speaker with speech excerpts in the paper who represented an individual country and not one of the many international organization representatives. END NOTE.)

MEDIA ACCURATE ON KROL'S REMARKS FOR DIVERSIFICATION

¶7. (U) "Reuters", "Associated Press" (English), "Agence France Presse", "Deutsche Welle", Russian "RIA Novosti" and "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" (Russian), Azeri "Day.Az." articles highlighted Krol's conference remarks on U.S. support for energy diversification. The "Reuters", "Associated Press", and "Agence France Presse" articles accurately quoted Krol regarding the recent gas pipeline dispute on "Central Asia Center - 4" pipeline between Russia and Turkmenistan. Krol noted that this event or possible natural disasters spoke in favor of diversifying export routes. The "Reuters" article also carried Krol's remarks that Turkmenistan showed interest in "Nabucco" and was waiting for specific proposals. The article also accurately quoted Krol on human rights in Turkmenistan. The "Associated Press" story accurately covered Krol's remarks on opportunities for U.S. companies in Turkmenistan.

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¶8. (U) "Associated Press", "Agence France Presse", "RIA Novosti" stories accurately highlighted Krol's remarks that U.S. efforts on energy diversification was not aimed at undermining Russia in the region, but rather promoted an uninterrupted and secure energy supply. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Turkmen language service (Turkmen) April 27 broadcast accurately carried an exclusive interview with Krol, addressing many of the same topics. RFE/RL carried an accurate article based on the radio story on April 28.

SOME MEDIA GIVE MISLEADING REPORT ON IRANIAN ENGAGEMENT

¶9. "Associated Press" April 24 and "Asia Times Online" (English) April 28 stories gave an inaccurate description of Krol's remarks regarding U.S. policy toward Iran. "AP" reported that Krol stated the U.S. remained open to an Iranian route for NABUCCO. "Asia Times Online" claimed Krol made a similar statement in his speech at the conference, which the article noted included Iranian delegates in the audience. "Kazakhstan Newsline" (English, Russian) reprinted the "AP" story on April 27. (NOTE: Krol made remarks about the Obama administration's open approach regarding Iran presto press at the conference gaggle, but made no statement regarding gas flow through Iran. END NOTE.)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT KROL'S REMARKS REGARDING COOPERATION ON AFGHANISTAN

¶10. (U) The April 24 story from the "RIA Novosti" gave accurate coverage on Krol's remarks from the press gaggle regarding transportation of non-lethal supplies through Turkmenistan to support efforts in Afghanistan. The story accurately quoted Krol that the United States respected Turkmenistan's neutrality and political position and was not seeking any specific military agreements with Turkmenistan.

¶11. (SBU) COMMENT: With one small exception, the state and international media coverage of Krol's visit was accurate and favorable. The exception was the misinterpretation by "AP" that the United States is open to Iran's inclusion in the NABUCCO project. Otherwise, Post was pleased not to see any Russian media using the opportunity to misconstrue Krol's remarks on the gas pipeline as anti-Russian or part of the new "great game." Those outlets that might usually be tempted to give such an anti-U.S. slant instead

carried accurately Krol's comments on the benefits of pipeline diversification. In state media, DAS Krol was well received and had short appearances in so many reports that Post was unable to track all of them. Overall, DAS Krol's visit provided a strong, positive image of U.S. cooperation with Turkmenistan in both state and international media.

MILES